

Using a Legacy Minolta MD 50mm 1:1.7 Lens

Recently in a local Seattle thrift store, I came across a Minolta X-370 with an attached MD 50mm 1:1.7 lens. Normally, I would not be interested in this camera but it was very cheap (1/2 price day) and better yet, it had working batteries! It had the normal cosmetic wear for a 1980's camera but seemed to be fully functional.



Minolta X-370 MD 50mm 1:1.7



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Suddenly nostalgic, the thought of shooting some film came over me. I rushed home and loaded the Minolta with Kodak Gold 200 film. For the next few weeks, I carried the camera around in my back pack snapping off the odd picture from time to time. Finally, the roll was complete and I went down to Walmart to mail the film off for processing.

A week later, I rushed over to Walmart to pick up my prints. I was very excited to see the results. Well, I was extremely underwhelmed to say the least. Some of the shots were just OK but most were not good at all. It appears that the lens did not focus the reds and greens together on the film plane. I have attached some of the worst examples. None of the pictures from the camera were sharp and in focus as I expected. Also, the colors of the prints and scans seemed to be off as well as faded or washed out.



Note: The 1:1.7 on the photo watermarks serves only to identify the lens attached to the Minolta x-370 camera. The photos were actually shot using different apertures and speeds as the light warranted. Not all photos exhibited the color aberration shown above but none of the pictures were as sharp as they should have been. In light of the results detailed below, I will retest the camera with a different film manufacturer and use a different service to process the exposed film. That will have to wait, however, for a different day.



I was just about to throw the camera into the trash when I wondered if, in fact, the problem was with the lens, the film carriage, etc. or with the processing. I removed the lens and attached it to a Sony MD to e-mount adapter. Next, I got out two Sony mirrorless cameras – the Sony NEX5N 16mp and the Sony a-5000 20mp. See below for the excellent results. Any focusing issues in the digital photos can be attributed to operator error or the use focus peaking instead of manual focus. Comparison digital photos were taken using a Sony e-mount telephoto lens set roughly at 50mm.



Sony NEX-5N MD 50mm 1:1.7



Sony NEX-5N MD 50mm 1:1.7





Sony a5000 MD 50mm 1:1.7



Sony a5000 16-50mm @ 50mm



